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THE BLESSING AND KISSING OF CANDLES.

We find the following in Dr. Cullen's late Pastoral:—

"The Church, in the lessons and gospel read on this festival, proposes to draw our attention to the great events which we have mentioned (the Purification of the Blessed Virgin, and the Presentation of Christ); with the same view, she has introduced the practice of solemn processions on this day, and the blessing of wax candles. The procession through the church reminds us of the approach of the Holy Virgin with St. Joseph to the Temple, bearing the divine Saviour, to present him to his Father; and the lights which are carried are destined (query, designed?) to represent him who is the splendour of his Father's glory, the light of light, the Orient from on High, the light that shineth in darkness, and cometh into the world to illumine all who were sitting in the shades of death. The blessing of the wax candles at the altar, the procession through the church, and the burning tapers, should all serve to bring us back in spirit to Jerusalem, to make us think of the days that are gone, and to fill us with gratitude and thanksgiving for the wonders which God has wrought for the salvation of his people.

"In accordance with the spirit of the Church, we exhort you most warmly, rev. brethren, to explain all these practices and ceremonies to the faithful; and if in any church the necessities of the times interrupted their observance, we entreat of you to re-establish them for the spiritual advantages and edification of the people. The wax candles blessed on this Festival, and sanctified by the prayers of the Church, should be preserved with great care, and when used with faith in the time of sickness and at the hour of death, they will be productive of most salutary effects."—(Pastoral, pp. 6 and 7.)

We have spoken once before of blessing candles, in our number for January, 1854, pp. 6 and 7. But being thus called on, we speak of it again here.

As Dr. Cullen acknowledges that the practice has not been kept up in some chapels, and as he also admits that it is done in a poor way in other chapels, we shall show our readers how it is done where things can be managed in style. We take our account from Dale's translation of the "Ceremonial according to the Roman Rite" by Baldeschi. This Baldeschi is, or was, "Master of Ceremonies" of St. Peter's Church at Rome; and the translation has this in its first page.—"APPROBATION. We hereby approve of this translation of Baldeschi's work on the Ecclesiastical Ceremonies.—N. CARD. WISEMAN. Westminster, August 2, 1853."

"The blessing of the Candles by the Bishop.—The candles are placed upon a credence between the throne and the altar, in such a manner that the bishop may easily asperse and incense them. The bishop, in *cappa*, is received *more solito* and having made the usual prayer, is conducted to his throne, and vested in amice over the rochet, alb, girdle, pectoral cross, stole, cope, and plain mitre. * * * The mitre being taken off, the bishop rises and makes the benediction of the candles in a *ferial* tone. He stands *somewhat turned towards the candles* (why not look straight at them?), having the book held before him *more solito*. * * * The bishop having finished the benediction, sits, and receives the mitre. The senior dignitary *paratus* then receives an *ornamented candle*, and presents it to the bishop, *kissing* first the candle, and then the bishop's hand. * * * The assistant deacons raise the borders of the cope, and the gremial is sustained by two acolytes on the knees of the bishop (do they sit on his knees?), who now proceeds to distribute the candles to the clergy and others of distinction, who are conducted with the usual *reverences* by a *master of ceremonies*, each and all according to their rank."—P. 163 and 164.

The "distribution" is thus described, p. 159:—

"Before the celebrant turns towards the people, the second master of the ceremonies should give notice to the highest dignitary of the choir, in order that, vested in the usual habit of the choir, without stole, according to a decree of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, of February 14, 1705, he may stand in readiness, on the highest step, to give the candle to the celebrant. This candle is given to him by the deacon, who *kisses it*, but not the hand of the priest. The celebrant also kisses it on receiving it, and afterwards presents it to the sub-deacon, who receives it *with the ordinary kisses*, and deposits it on the altar. The celebrant having afterwards taken another candle from the deacon, gives it in his turn to the highest dignitary of the choir, who receives it *knelling*, and *kissing the candle* and hand of the celebrant, conformably to the decision of the Sacred Congregation of Rites,* February 4, 1705. He then makes the proper *reverences*, and retires to his place, accompanied by the second master of ceremonies, who invites the choir to proceed in proper order.

"After the highest dignitary in the choir has departed, the deacon and sub-deacon ascend the steps and, *knelling down* on the edges of the predella, receive the candles from the celebrant *with the usual kisses*; they then rise, and having *genuflected* on the predella, return, the sub-deacon to the right of the celebrant to *raise the borders of*

"This is a Congregation of the Cardinals at Rome, whose duty it is to decide all questions that arise about religious rites. Imagine a grave assembly of Cardinals met to "decide" when the kisser should kiss the hand, and when the candle, and when he should kiss both!

his cope, and the deacon to his left to present the candles. They give their own in charge to the acolytes. The celebrant then distributes the candles among the clergy, first to the priests, and afterwards to the clerks, all of whom advance two and two, and *kiss first the candle*, and then the hand of the celebrant.

"Towards the end of the distribution, the acolytes appointed, at the intimation of the Master of Ceremonies, will light the candles of the clergy for the procession."

But we have given enough of this. Such are the vain shows and ceremonies in which the Church of Rome delights. Such is the worship in the Church of St. Peter at Rome. Baldeschi's book, approved by Cardinal Wiseman for use in England, extends to 300 pages, and contains nothing less trifling. We must return to our extract from Dr. Cullen's pastoral, given above.

Dr. Cullen says, the Church has two great objects in view on Candlemas day:—"First, in the lessons and gospel read on this festival to draw our attention to the great events," i.e., the purification of the Blessed Virgin, and the presentation of Christ in the Temple; second, "the blessing of wax candles."

Dr. Cullen says not a word more of the first object. He does not exhort the priests to explain those lessons and that gospel to the people; and no wonder, since he does not understand those Scriptures himself, as we shall show in another article. See p. 16.

But he goes on with all his might to magnify "the blessing of wax candles." "In accordance with the spirit of his Church," he "exhorts" his "rev. brethren" "most warmly" "to explain all these practices and ceremonies to the faithful."

Dr. Cullen, with all his praise of blessed candles, does not give much explanation himself. He says, "the blessing of the wax candles at the altar" is intended "to bring us back in spirit to Jerusalem"—"to make us think of the days that are gone;" and in page one he says this festival affords an opportunity "to trace back our sacred rites to the cradle of religion." But we ask, with all reverence, were they all *kissing blessed candles when Christ was presented in the Temple at Jerusalem?*

On this point we can give explanation, from one of the most learned men about rites and ceremonies that the Church of Rome has ever had—Martene, a learned Benedictine Monk, of the congregation of St. Maur, who says, "Concerning the blessing of wax candles, no mention is made in Amalarius, Walfrid, or the Vulgate Copy of Alcuin, who only states that wax candles were given by the Pope; neither in the Gelasian or Gregorian Sacramentaries, nor in that of Gello, or in others written above 900 years (i.e., about A.D. 800), is there any mention made about that matter. In an ancient Missal of the Church of Tours, written about 800 years ago (i.e., about the year 906), one only mention is found about blessing candles." So as far as we can find, candles were never blessed for NINE HUNDRED YEARS after the presentation of Christ in the Temple!

Of the "spiritual advantage" of *kissing* the candles, we find no explanation at all. But considering how minutely Baldeschi's book (approved by Cardinal Wiseman) dwells on the *kissing* of the candles, and considering also what exact decisions "the Sacred Congregation of Rites" have thought it necessary to make about the *kissing* of the candles, we suppose there must be at least as much virtue in the "kissing" as in the "blessing."

Dr. Cullen, however, does not mention the "kissing." Perhaps he was afraid of the CATHOLIC LAYMAN. We beg of him to have no fears; we will cheerfully publish in our pages any explanation of the "spiritual advantages" of "kissing the candles" that he may wish to give.

Melancholy as it is to see Christian worship reduced to such puerile trivialities, there are yet stronger feelings awakened in our minds by the last sentence in our extract from Dr. Cullen's pastoral. We give it here again:—"The wax candles blessed on this festival and sanctified by the prayers of the Church, should be preserved with great care, and when used with faith in the time of sickness, and at the hour of death, they will be productive of most salutary effects."

Oh, what a solemn hour is that hour of death! when nature trembles at approaching dissolution, and the dread reality of judgment to come becomes present to the soul! "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" was the dying cry of the first martyr of Christ: and what else can then support the soul, but trust in Him "who is able to keep that which is committed unto him against that day."

What, then, shall we think of the man who, writing calmly and coldly in his study what hundreds of priests are to teach to THOUSANDS of people, finds not one word to direct the parting soul to him who, alone, can keep it safe until that day, but coldly tells the dying sinner that "wax candles (duly paid for, of course), AT THE HOUR OF DEATH, will be productive of most salutary effects!" This, indeed, is "spermaceti for an inward bruise." For such teaching we have no words that will express our horror!

De benedictione cereorum nulla fit mentio apud Amalarium, Valfridum, et vulgatum Alcuinum, qui cereos tantum a Pontifice dari asserit. Sed neque in Gelasiano, Gregoriano, Gelloniensi, aliisque supra nonagentos annos scriptis sacramentalibus aliquid ea de re extat. In antiquo missali ecclesie Turonensis ante annos 800 scripto unica ad luminaria benedictio reperitur. * * * (Tractatus de antiqua Ecclesie Disciplina. Edit Lugduni, 1706, p. 117.)

The death of St. Stephen, Acts vii, 59. 2nd Timothy, i. 12. And telling me the sovereign thing on earth Was spermaceti for an inward bruise—Shakespeare.

THE RIVAL REVELATIONS.

WHILE lately pursuing our examination of the testimonies of eminent Roman Catholic writers upon the long-disputed subject of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, our attention was attracted to a class of evidence which the present Pope Pius IX. seems to have had especially under his consideration, when, in his letter apostolic of 8th December 1854, he not only asserted that the Blessed Virgin was "free from all stain of original sin," but "that it had been so revealed by God himself."

We now solicit the attention of our readers to some of the results of our inquiries into this part of the subject, merely premising that if any such revelation ever was made, either one way or other, it seems somewhat strange that the dispute was not determined ages ago. Nothing deserves the name of *revelation* that does not come from God. If God has spoken, "*causa finita est*;" let the world only know where, when, and to whom the doctrine was revealed, and surely all further discussion would be vain: the cause is determined.

Alas! however, for Roman Catholic unity, so often boasted of, so seldom realized, there appear to be as serious disputes within the pale of the Roman Catholic Church, touching alleged *revelations*, as about any other part of this protracted controversy; and were we to listen to them at all, we should require another decree of the Pope to tell us what we are to believe touching these very revelations.

Two nearly contemporary female saints, of great dignity, are commemorated by festivals in the Roman Breviary, and each of them with "duplex" honour. St. Catherine of Sienna on the 30th April (Brev. pars. Verna, p. 497), and St. Brigit (or Birgitta) on the 8th October (Brev. pars autumnalis, p. 385).

St. Catherine is stated (in Lessons v. and vi. Breviary, p. 498) not only to have had a vision of our Blessed Lord, and to have had the marks of his wounds imprinted on her body ever afterwards, as she herself related to her confessor, Raymundus, but is there asserted to have had the *miraculous* power of answering the most difficult questions propounded to her by professors of divinity. "Her learning was inspired, not acquired," and "no one ever approached her who did not depart the better for it." When the great western schism, of which we gave our readers some outlines in a former number (December, 1852) was at its height, it will be recollected that, after a succession of Popes had removed their residence to Avignon in France, it was by the persuasion of St. Catherine of Sienna that Pope Gregory XI. was prevailed on to remove from Avignon to Rome, a circumstance recorded in the same lesson in the Breviary, p. 498.

Father Faber also, in his recent work on the "*Blessed Sacrament*," which we have already noticed in our pages, tells us that St. Catherine of Sienna was highly favoured by our Lord, "who often appeared to her in the blessed sacrament, and under different forms; but she almost always saw angels holding a veil of gold, the symbol of the mystery, and in the midst a host, with the semblance of an infant"—p. 529. "From her childhood till she was fifteen, St. Catherine took nothing but a little red wine mixed with water, and a small piece of food; after that age she confined herself to water, herbs, and bread. At the age of twenty she left off bread, and then all external food, without her health being the least affected by it. When her confessor several times ordered her to eat something, she attempted each time nearly cost her her life"—p. 523.

Here, then, we have a saintly virgin of the highest repute (and duly canonized by Pope Pius II., as the Breviary itself informs us, p. 499); and, if any saintly teachings ought to be deemed *oracular*, what believer in the Breviary can doubt that it is those of St. Catherine of Sienna, who died at Rome on the 29th April, 1380.

It is time, however, that we should say something of St. Brigit (whom we must caution our readers against confounding with St. Brigid, so long one of the patron saints of Ireland). St. Brigit was a Swedish or Scandinavian princess, nearly contemporary with St. Catherine, for she died 23rd July, 1373, and had also the privilege of *divine revelations* after the death of her husband Ulphon (for she was not a virgin, but a widow, with eight children), though her miraculous powers did not actually commence with widowhood; for we are gravely informed that, *before she was born*, she saved her mother from shipwreck!

Here, then, we have two canonized saints, both equally invoked by the faithful, and equally recorded as *inspired*

"Doctina ejus infusa, non acquisita fuit, secretorum lucrarum professoribus difficillimas de Divinitate questiones proponitibus respondit. Nemo ad eam accessit, qui non melior abierit."—Breviary Romanum, 30th April, p. 498.

Our readers, if inclined to hear more of this celebrated saint, and her superhuman austerities, may procure her life at the small charge of one penny (in Vol. XVI. of Mr. Duffy's Young Christians' Library); in which young Christians may learn how St. Catherine, in her childhood, consecrated her virginity to God by a private vow. How she refused to be married at 12 years of age. How she lived on boiled herbs, without sauce or bread, and wore a large iron girdle armed with sharp points from 15 years old. How the devil "filled her imagination with the most filthy representations." How, "for a long time she sucked and dressed an infectious cancer, and served an old woman named Toccoa, infected with leprosy," and how she died at the age of 33, and had her body buried at Rome, and her skull kept in the Dominican Church at Sienna, and at last, in 1461, was canonized by Pope Pius II. for all her virtues!

"Cum adhuc in utero gesseretur, a naufragio propter eam mater erepta est. Viro defuncto, Birgitta, audita Christi voce in somnia, arciorum vitæ torram est aggressa. Cui deinde arcana multa fuerunt divinitus revelata. Bonitatis Nomen in Sanctorum numerum retulit."—Brev. Rom., 8 Oct., p. 386.